

Iconic/Ironic Greenery: The Cultural Cultivation of Plants in Brecht Evens' *The Making Of*¹

Charlotte Pylyser, KU Leuven

In her recent article "Art for Plant's Sake? Questioning Human Imperialism in the Age of Biotech" (2012), bioart scholar Monika Bakke describes how art can explore the post-natural condition that is typical of modern human-plant relationships and which is made explicit in the many biotechnological advancements, such as genetically modified crops, that contemporary man must learn to manage and to form an ethical opinion on. Bakke illustrates the creative power of biotechnology by describing Eduardo Kac's artwork *Edunia* (2003-2008), an instance of transgenesis, "the transfer of genetic material from one organism to another" (Bakke 10), which in this case involves the transfer of the artist's DNA onto a petunia plant whose pink flowers then symbolize the material and metaphysical "blooming" of a curious interspecies cross-breed. As Bakke goes on to explain, the creative gesture of the artist is at once also an invasive one as it changes the initial genetic make-up of the plant. This human-induced alteration does not only refer to the genetic engineering that takes place in modern day high-tech, highly sterilized, highly procedural laboratory set-ups, however. In the case of the petunia genus, it has precursors that date back to the nineteenth century when the wild petunia plant was imported from South America to be domesticated in botanical gardens and then cultivated into innumerable colorful variants by enthusiastic private garden owners (Bakke 11). Kac's fusing of himself with the plant then symbolizes an intensification of an age-old principle in the representation of the relationship between man and nature: man intervenes in (plant) life, (plant) life carries the mark of said intervention and perpetually confronts man with the agency and impact which the latter often seems to consider defining characteristics of his own kind.

Edunia walks a thin line between the performance and the critique of notions of "instrumentalization, colonization, separation and control" (Bakke 10) and while Bakke

¹ This Open Access text is the final version of a text by the same title published in [Laist, Randy, ed. *Plants and Literature: Essays in Critical Plant Studies*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013. Print.](#) The article in question runs from page 181 to page 195.

appears to consider this double state somewhat of a disappointment, it seems to me that it could be an interesting exercise to foreground this doubleness as a way of further exploring the conceptual and ethical challenges which plants pose to contemporary critical theory and practice. Kac's gesture also suggests a fundamental form of proximity between plants and humans, going so far as to reflect the mutual plant-human history which many proponents of ethical plant-human relations posit in a genetic opening up of those domains (in the *Edunia*, Kac and his petunias have a future together). Of course, if *Edunia* can be considered an instrumentalization of plant life, it can also be regarded as perpetuating the anthropocentric focus which is often characterized as accompanying said instrumentalization (indeed, Kac intervenes and leaves a symbolic and genetic mark on plants which can only return the favour on the symbolic plane – no mutual exchange of DNA took place). Again, it seems to me that this inconsistency can be fruitful ground for further investigation, particularly in terms of the ease with which the association between the ethical treatment of plants and their humanization is formed. From Bakke's text it emerges quite clearly that the ethical conceptualization of plants is often considered as presupposing a movement that puts plants on the same level as humans in a sense that bestows upon plants almost all the functions which humans can perform. Plants can "talk," they can interact with the environment (Bakke mentions the quicksilver responses of the mimosa plant). "They 'experience the world in their own way' (Florianne Koechlin et al. quoted in Bakke 17), hence, they can sense, communicate and act. They are territorial beings, and this indicates some form of self-recognition, decision-making and communication. [...] plants behave intelligently and [...] some decision-making is taking place in the roots" (Bakke 17). The rationale behind allocating an experiential subjectivity proper to plants on the basis of traditionally humanized categorizations (in the case of territorialism one might even posit a connection with the instrumental, anthropocentric approach to human-plant ethics) certainly raises some questions. Indeed, if the ethical treatment of plants is contingent on their subjectivity and their subjectivity is dependent on their performance of traditionally human functions, one wonders if plants can truly be considered and treated in an ethical manner (as plants). It is not entirely clear whether the instability of the category of the human, the genetic component of which Bakke cleverly expands with an allusion to Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) earlier on in her text², further problematizes or presents a solution to the humanization assumption underlying the discourse found in "Art for Plant's Sake?" but it certainly points towards the

² Bakke mentions that "'we have never been human.' After all, despite many metabolic differences, we share about eighteen percent of our genes with thale cress" (Bakke 10).

necessity of letting ethical concerns with regard to human-plant relationships enter in a dialogue with the epistemological questions revolving around the possibility (or impossibility) of the “knowability” of the nature of plants to man. Plant silence is then perhaps not such a straightforward matter as Bakke seems to suggest. Indeed, one could easily conceive of the inaccessibility of a realm of plant-to-plant interactions to man as an empowering phenomenon. In this light, Bakke’s positing of man’s “basic obligation of curiosity to plants” (Bakke 17) might perhaps be more productively read on a metalevel that opens questions far beyond the mystery of the lightning-speed movements of the mimosa plant and which loop all the way back to the conceptualization of man and the emancipatory movements which have marked and still mark human (or mutual human-plant) history.

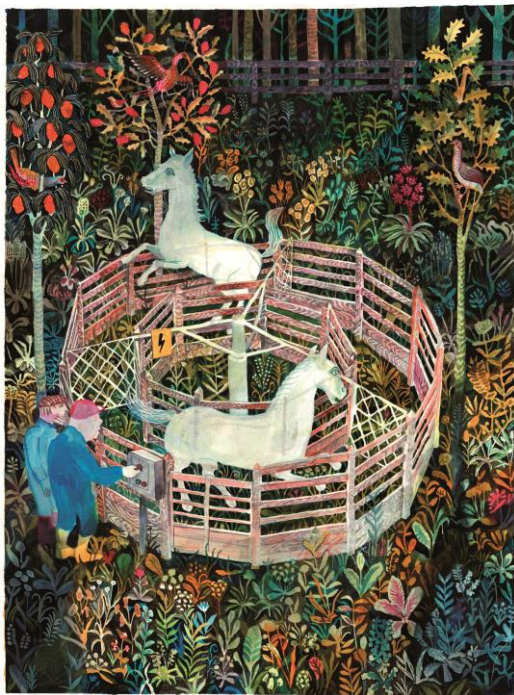
In light of the question of green silence, it seems useful not only to pay attention to those artworks that attempt to criticize it by humanising plants, but also to consider art that unambiguously effaces greenery as greenery. Paying attention to non-green works of art and literature allows us not only to analyze the instrumentalization implicit in works such as Kac’s on a larger (and more isolated) scale, it also offers us the opportunity to thematize a perspective that is absent from Bakke’s article, that of the cultural cultivation of plant silence (as opposed to its biotechnological cultivation). Indeed, the question as to how plant silence may be constructed in art and how it has been constructed throughout the course of art history is central to this text. Although a more general memetic³ approach to this question could no doubt garner interesting insights, I propose to focus on the ideological and aesthetic practices used to instrumentalize plants in a particular case-study: the graphic novel⁴ *The Making Of* (Drawn&Quarterly, 2012) by Flemish artist Brecht Evens. As this work is highly artistically intertextualized it will (indirectly) allow us to broaden our horizons towards other art works, traditions and movements.

The Making Of was originally published in Flanders under its Dutch title *De Liefhebbers* (Oogachtend, 2011) and features a striking amount of plant renditions that in my reading of the book are characterized by an equally striking quality of functional transparency. I argue below that this transparency is generated by three instances of instrumentalization on the level of plants. Plants function as a site for the development of the intertextual art network and as a

³ The term “memetic” refers to the concept of the meme, which is to be understood here in the sense in which Richard Dawkins famously coined it in *The Selfish Gene* (1976): “[a meme is] the new replicator, [it is] a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*” (Dawkins 192).

⁴ A graphic novel is usually understood to be a narrative sequence of images and words in a one-shot book form, written by a complete author (an author that is responsible for both the drawings and the story of a given work) and oriented towards an adult audience. In the context of Evens’ engagement with Art, however, it is important to add that the graphic novel is characterized by a culturally legitimatizing function.

way for the artist to showcase his skill (image 1). The intertextually-charged plants function as décor and decoration to the narrative in the style of both the miniature and the Pattern and Decoration movement of the late 1900s (image 1 and image 2). Finally, these elements allow a parodic effect to be generated by the book that culminates in the presence of a sculptural garden gnome (image 3). Each function refigures plant life (which always seems to be considered as a collective entity in the book) into a specific shape that obscures the biological and the symbolic presence of the plants in question. Plants, in other words, do not function as plants. In the case of the art intertext, the plants that make up the references to paintings are reduced to landscapes and still lifes. The function of plants as décor/panorama sees them function merely as stylized patterns, and the tension between inside(rs) and outside(rs) as parodied in *The Making Of* on the level of the art world is reflected in the presence of the garden gnome, as this kitschy element of garden decoration evokes the cultivation (disciplining) of plants in the many bourgeois front yards dotted along the pages of the graphic novel in contrast with the panoramic woods through which the characters of the book move. In order to familiarize the reader with the parodic aims of *The Making Of*, I first provide a summary of its story before moving on to the role of art and plants in the book.



© Oogachtend & Brecht Evens, 2011

Image 1: art intertext/decoration
(medieval Unicorn Tapestries)



© Oogachtend & Brecht Evens, 2011

Image 2: décor



© Oogachtend & Brecht Evens, 2011

Image 3: parody (the grotesque garden gnome)

The Making Of: Parody against Dichotomy

In *The Making Of*, Brecht Evens tells us the clearly (self-)parodic tale of a city-dwelling artist who attends a biannual open-air art festival that is organized for the first time in Beerpoele, a small Flemish countryside town that is extremely excited to welcome its first professional artist. The artist in question, Pieterjan, functions as an everyman character who is fundamentally determined by two elements that are quite commonly associated with the figure of the artist and with the scenes in which he (women are mostly featured in supporting roles in *The Making Of*) moves: the unbearable lightness of being that characterizes the highly institutionalized art circuit in Belgium (and abroad, but as a phenomenon it is perhaps most typical of continental Europe) and the weight of the artist's grotesquely tormented ego. Thus, Pieterjan teaches art to children whose lack of talent both exasperates him and feeds a sense of comfortable superiority that allows him to deal with his students with a pitying patience that prevents him from ever really getting through to them. Similarly, he develops a relationship with a fashionably-bespectacled gallery owner whose mercantile instincts and enthusiastic response to a charismatic artistic rival secretly annoy him to the point of disdainful retreat. The relationship in question implodes as his grandly conceptual ode to small-minded nothingness at the biannual is struck by lightning. Indeed, the plot of *The Making Of* centers around the construction and destruction of a collective artistic project created *in situ*, as Pieterjan would say, that really amounts to a gigantic garden gnome made out of the kindergarten crafting material *par excellence*: papier-mâché.

Driven by the need to fulfill his role as an artist (to do his job), but resentful of the “missionary work” (Evens 2011⁵) that such an endeavour implies, Pieterjan directs an ensemble of colorful Beerpoele natives who are overjoyed to be able to construct scaffolding and tear up newspapers in the name of art (the garden gnome). All of the townfolk except one subject themselves ever so willingly to Pieterjan's vision of art. Only Dennis, the town's resident schizophrenic, who achieves peace of mind by relentlessly drawing spirals on every object he comes across, including the scaffolding for the grotesque garden gnome, disrupts Pieterjan's idyll of artistic professionalism. In a fit of ill-directed micro-managerial rage (scaffolding is functional with or without spiral-decoration), Pieterjan insists that Dennis stop drawing curls on the wooden beams and exclaims that professionalism should not be sacrificed on the altar of inclusivity (Evens 2011). Dennis, significantly the only character who is described as expressing *himself* through art, is subsequently excluded from the project

⁵ No page numbers are indicated in *The Making Of*.

and locked in a make-shift cube where he spirals out of control up to the point of violence and later finds himself imprisoned in a medieval-style gaol that invites the reader to make connections to Evens' use of medieval miniature and illumination techniques. Not only does the figure of the madman serve as a perfect foil to Pieterjan's absurd megalomania, he also foregrounds the question of the position of art with regard to the inside-outside dichotomy that characterizes much of Western thought about the discipline and of the relevance of dichotomous thinking for answering that very question.

Pieterjan's outburst is of course ill-directed because the source of the frustration which he aims at Dennis lies in the general well-meaning naiveté and ignorance he encounters in his assignment to include the town into his artistic process. Pieterjan is frustrated not by the townfolk's lack of creativity (that lack mimics his own, as reflected by the preposterous gnome), but by their lack of understanding of the customs of the trade, their way of speaking about art, and their inability to act in accordance with what is expected of the art-savvy. The telephone conversations which the protagonist engages in with his gallery-keeping girlfriend, his life-line to the city, do reflect the *sérieux* which he misses in the countryside, but as often happens with customs and procedures, neither party appears to really enjoy these talks. Pieterjan finds some form of distraction in the arms of Cléo (after the muse presumably), a naively manipulative teenaged seductress with artistic ambitions whose unsuspecting use of difficult words turns him on. In his desire for her naive *sérieux*, his discourse of professionalism unravels and the utilitarian nature of his relationship with art is fully exposed. He uses his institutionalized artistic expertise to satisfy her need to feel special and accomplished and essentially talks her into bed. Cléo and Pieterjan's anticlimactic first and final night together reflects the wordplay inherent in the Dutch title of the book which relies on the double meaning of "liefhebbers" as a noun that signifies both "amateur" and "lover." Pieterjan's fizzled-out relationship with Cléo thus confirms his membership of exactly that group onto which he had bestowed his magnanimous condescension up until that time: the crafters, the wannabes, the garden variety of artists. If Dennis is Pieterjan's perfect foil in terms of the inside-outside dichotomy, then Cléo serves to demystify the exclusive relationship which art is often said to hold with the principle of autonomy⁶.

It is safe to say that art, the creative process (which becomes a posture, a pose and an ideological production), and the positioning exercises of the field of art constitute the central

⁶ Autonomy here designates artistic autonomy in contrast to artistic heteronomy. Whereas the former position is characterized by the attitude in which art depends solely on itself and is created for itself, the latter position puts art in the service of art-external instances and goals.

thematic cluster in the story of *The Making Of*. But art is important to the book in other ways as well, including the style in which the book is painted (the artwork in the graphic novel is primarily rendered through watercolors) and the intertextual/interartistic art references that are strewn across its pages. It is in these elements that the connection between art and plant-life begins to unfold.

The Suggestion of Art: Instrument, Discourse, Ideology

In Flanders and abroad, Brecht Evens is lauded for his trademark watercolor style that can best be described as lush, luminescent, and colorful. Evens has a tendency to play with perspective (especially when it comes to buildings and structures) and with the opacity of his ecoline-paintings. He often includes so-called splash pages, pages that are taken up almost entirely by a single image, or spreads, two consecutive pages that contain a single image, into his graphic novels so as to regulate the rhythm of the narrative, to foreground certain elements, or to indicate that the narrative is to be read on a different level. One such a level is that of the dream. Dreams are rendered in a black and white style the simplicity of which contrasts very vividly with the exuberance of Evens' watercolors. Another level is that of the art intertext. Even's use of splash pages, especially in the case of his appropriation of existing artworks such as Hokusai's iconic woodblock print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (1830-1833), Matisse's fauvist *Landscape at Collioure* (1905), or the late medieval Unicorn Tapestries, always carries the connotation of the picture frame. Even when Evens' mise-en-page follows a more traditional comics format, he never opts for a regular grid pattern with closed-frame panels, rendering his edgeless panels open to a painterly or artistic interpretation as well. The author confirms that potentiality by evoking paintings such as *Le bonheur de vivre* (1905-1906), again by Matisse, and various cubistic still lifes by Braque in separate panels, but he also expands the iconic references to paintings by repeating stylistic characteristics of the artists and artworks that we have mentioned in panels that depict scenes that are less obviously connected to the artworks in question. One striking instance of this approach can be observed in Evens' transferral of the color blotch constellation which we recognize in the landscape of *Le bonheur de vivre* onto a different open-air scene that then interestingly becomes instantly recognizable as somehow connected to the art paradigm. Clear echoes of Seurat's pointillism and hints of Henri Rousseau's exotic landscapes add to the intermedial network, but it is possible to detect traces of other 19th and early 20th century artists as well, such as Cézanne and Van Gogh. Japanese woodblock printing and medieval miniatures similarly form a graphic reference throughout the book. Finally, Evens' merry

band of amateurs contains certain art-related figures in the form of an insecure balloon-animal-creating Pierrot (the sad clown which originated in the Commedia dell'Arte and has come to function as a double of the artist) and a perpetually heart-broken action figure version of the protagonist of Munch's *The Scream* series (1893-1910) called Valentine. The effect of this network of art references is that the suggestion of art is present at all times in *The Making Of*.

If we take a closer look at the nature of the suggestion which Evens constructs in his book, we see that the intertextual references mimic and support the role of art as we have observed it in our character-driven analysis. In *The Making Of*, art is instrument, discourse, and ideology. Evens does not interact with the artists he references on their terms, neither when it comes to what it is that his references are exploring or expressing (in this context the lack of attention which his highly postmodern intertextual, parodic and metareflective graphic novel bestows upon postmodern art is doubly striking, although this is quite a typical aspect of the postmodern method), nor in terms of the graphic reflection of that expression and exploration. Matisse and company are recycled, assembled, stuck together, and applied strategically in places where Evens wants to convey some minimally recognizable trace of the art intertext and serve as a way of keeping the many outdoor landscapes in the book interesting through a mix of their visual ingenuity, attractiveness, and variety and through the intertextual referential frame they evoke. In opting for an instrumental use of art within a graphic novel art parody (note that the graphic novel is strongly tied to the comics medium which in turn may be linked with certain mass productive practices typical of the culture industry of the twentieth century) – in capitalizing on some of the properties of the intertext, in other words – Evens may be said to play with the critique of notorious, but not quite contemporary, mass cultural production critics such as Adorno who complained in his “Culture Industry Reconsidered” (1975) that “the cultural commodities of the industry are governed, as Brecht and Suhrkamp expressed it thirty years ago, by the principle of their realization as value, and not by their own specific content and harmonious formation” (Adorno 13).

Iconic/Ironic Greenery: The Cultivation of Art

I have spent some time sketching the art problematic in *The Making Of* exactly because it is primarily in the graphic rendition of plants and flowers that Evens manages to cultivate its complexity. It is Evens' use of the art intertext that helps create the parodic effect which in turn serves to question the dichotomies which we have introduced. It is in this order that I propose to have a look at the way in which Evens utilizes greenery in *The Making Of*.

Merely flipping through the pages of *The Making Of* will confirm the overwhelming presence of greenery in the book. The silhouette of plants, trees and flowers and especially landscapes or still lifes filled with plants, trees and flowers (framed plants and flowers) visually dominates the graphic novel. Our eyes wander through leafy, dark forests, over swampy fern-filled grounds, through meticulously crafted front yards, and onto bridges that cross speech balloon ponds in fairy tale parks. We pass by warmly-colored sunset shores, disappear into tangles of multi-colored underwater algae, and are tempted by the dark-blue night to walk a walk of shame along the greenhouse of Cléo's eccentric orchid-cultivating uncle – a nod to *Twin Peak*'s Harold Smith perhaps – and into the arms of Pieterjan's uncanny sculptural garden gnome.

It should not come as a surprise that my description of plant-life in the book reads like something of a panorama considering Evens' ambition to sketch an environment in his graphic novels⁷ (and his background in illustration arguably). But one can also sense a strong element of sequential propulsion in the image that I have conveyed in the previous paragraph. Indeed, on various occasions we see the characters in Evens' tragicomedy travel linearly through the lushly decorated pages which he has composed. Sometimes this happens indirectly, when the liminality of a scene is repeated on an adjoining page and features the same figure, for instance. This technique is evident in Evens' introduction of one of Pieterjan's frustrators into the story, an apparently innocuous cat who is shown moving from the woods into civilization on a splash page and then charms its way into the garden shed where the protagonist is put up for the duration of the festival on the next page. In contrast with the splash page, the latter page is divided into borderless panels, making the transition of the cat from the forest and into the ordered universe of the carefully cultivated garden a challenge to the reader's ability to follow the sequential integration of the story. Such devices create an interesting and quite pervasive undercurrent of readerly disorientation.

Other times, the characters' movement literally starts and stops at opposite edges of a page or spread, and, in some cases, topples over onto the next page or panel. Thus we find that Pieterjan and Chloé walk through a garden of Eden setting on an almost cinematic trajectory that first depicts the couple in the upper left-hand corner of the exotic spread and then each time foregrounds a moment of their trajectory until the final still brings our eye to the bottom

⁷ In "Everything for the Eye? [Some Thoughts] about *The Making Of* by Brecht Evens." (2012, my translation), Sébastien Conard quotes Evens as positing a number of statements that are enlightening with regard to his vision on the comics medium: "I interpret "environmental sketch" literally as showing [the reader] an environment, because that is what a comic book should excel at. I mean: [a comic book] should give you the impression that you are visiting a place where your eye can roam freely" (Conard, my translation).

right corner of the second page of the spread. The suggested propulsion is emphasized by the connection of the speech balloons that contain their dialogue, but in contrast with a true cinematic effect, each moment on the path which materializes by grace of the expression of certain points on the trajectory also coincides with a visually explicated position which the point in question takes up in the context of the spread's tabular⁸ workings. The above technique is one that can be quite strongly linked to the author ever since he made use of it on the cover of *The Wrong Place* (he did so on two separate occasions, both the cover illustration of the original Dutch version and of the translated versions make use of the idea of propulsion). As Greice Schneider shows in her analysis of *The Wrong Place*, this form of spatial propulsion entails an unambiguous element of temporal organization (the trajectory of the characters on the page implies a temporal order, sometimes also a causal one) that supplies much-needed reading direction to pages that otherwise challenge a great deal of the panel-driven sequentiality typical of comics (Schneider). In *The Making Of*, such instances are somewhat more rare than in *The Wrong Place*, and the intensification of the transitions from the splash pages and spreads that foreground the tabular workings of the comics pages to those pages that follow a more classic comics lay-out pattern, as well as the tension that results from the difficulty of successfully establishing such a transition, greatly foregrounds the role of the sequence in the narrative project of the former book. While the deployment of sequentiality as a connecting and ordering mechanism contains some glitches in the book, the intention of the representation of visual progress as well as its narrative reflection in terms of the linear structure of the *Bildungs* plot that characterizes *The Making Of* is massively present and frustrates any attempt at book-length free-roaming which our eye might undertake – the panorama can never truly be viewed at a single glance.

Thus the effect of Evens' panoramic propulsion is a double one. On the one hand, the flowery pages of *The Making Of* gain a semblance of autonomy in the sense that they suggest that the setting through which the characters move constitutes an environment (as distinguished from a story world) unto itself. On the other hand, this autonomy is always restricted in its potential by the needs of the sequential narrative and the requirements for intelligible representation of sequential order. The challenges which the narrative poses to the panoramic whole are most obviously foregrounded in the constant style register ruptures that are necessary building blocks for Evens' art intertext, which is in turn crucial to the parodic

⁸ A concept introduced to comics studies by Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle (1976), tabularity signifies the spatial, atemporal arrangement of graphic elements on a surface (usually the page) in contrast to a linear, sequential approach thereof.

effect which the graphic novel generates. We move from meticulously cut-out miniature-esque flower fields over broad, bright fauvist streaks of grass to pointillistic beaches. In deploying his intertextual network thusly, Evens may be said to opt for a method that foregrounds greenery in order to have it work primarily as background or décor, rather than as an environment.

Evens' use of plants as décor invites connections to the Pattern and Decoration (P&D) movement which Gregory Fuller describes as follows in his book on kitsch art: "The P&D artists attempted to undo the division between High Art and décor. Traditional fabrics and materials were used often and folk art, ethnic décor and traditional crafts were rehabilitated as simultaneously old and new "human" motifs." (Fuller 14;16, my translation). In contrast to Evens' use of the art intertext which we have introduced above, the author does not seem to refer to specific P&D artworks, but rather makes use of the general aesthetic of the movement. In doing so, especially in his elaboration of the floral motives which grace the pages of *The Making Of*, Evens echoes the central P&D concern with the division between High art (specifically the institutionalized art world in his case) and amateur crafts, between the in/out and autonomy/heteronomy dichotomies pertaining to art. Indeed, if plants and flowers are involved in the development of the art intertext which we have introduced above, greenery also becomes the site for the evocation of a kitschy (in the broad sense of the term) amateur aesthetic that refers to the small-town hobbyists which the protagonist encounters in Beerpoele. At times the same patch of flowers or plants may even function as the venue for both, as is the case for Evens' appropriation of one of the Unicorn tapestries mentioned above (image 1).

While Evens refers specifically to that individual hanging of the medieval Unicorn narrative that shows the elusive unicorn corralled and which is aptly called "The Unicorn in Captivity"⁹, it is the intricate miniature floral technique which functions as a background to the entire series that is repeated several times throughout the graphic novel. Without the medieval context or the immediate intertextual reference, however, the symbolic connotation of the medieval hand-woven flowers, which often refer to fertility in the original hanging, is lost. Evens' stilized miniature flowers, which are rendered in a near-translucent negative watercolor technique, are also much harder to taxonomize and in combination with the placement of the flowers on the page as decorative flourishes or edging (frames), the floral

⁹ The Unicorn Tapestries are reproduced and explained further on the website of the Metropolitan Museum which houses the originals in their collection: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/70007568>.

presence in *The Making Of* is most reminiscent of the delicate flowers typical of a certain style of stationary paper design. In addition to a décor (as a panoramic narrative series the Unicorn Tapestries may be considered an inspiration on this level too), flowers thus also function as decoration in Evens' graphic novel, which arguably adds to their biological and symbolic transparency. Indeed, Evens' flowers may be said to produce the suggestion of kitsch by analogy with the suggestion of art which we have commented on before.

Evens' parodic commentary unfolds beautifully in his use of "The Unicorn in Captivity" which is after all not only a top piece in one of the most renowned museums on earth, but also an anonymous and painstakingly handcrafted artefact (a wall-hanging of a different sort than a painting) made on commission (the common mode in which art was produced up until the 18th century). The instrumental stationary effect which he achieves by isolating and reproducing a decorative pattern belonging to the otherwise highly iconic and symbolic artwork is particularly interesting when we consider that the fabled and stately unicorn, which in *The Making Of* has transformed into a peculiar crossbreed of a work horse and a fairground attraction, shares its function as the object of a great quest with the preposterous garden gnome (image 3) worshipped by Pieterjan and his disciples. In Evens' sardonic appropriation of the instrumentalization of plants in the décor and decoration traditions, the practice of the cultural cultivation of plants (its richness as well as its limitations) is made eminently visible.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W. "Culture Industry Reconsidered" *New German Critique* 6 (1975): 12-19. Print.
- Bakke, Monika. "Art for Plant's Sake? Questioning Human Imperialism in the Age of Biotech." *Parallax* 18.4 (2012): 9-25. Print.
- Conard, Sébastien. "Alles voor het oog? Over *De Liefhebbers* van Brecht Evens." *Rekto:Verso: Tijdschrift voor cultuur en kritiek*. 50 (2012): 14-17. Web.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Print.
- Evens, Brecht. *De liefhebbers* [*The Making Of*]. Leuven: Oogachtend, 2011. Print.
- Fuller, Gregory. *Kitsch-Art: Wie Kitsch zur Kunst wird*. Cologne: DuMont, 1992. Print.
- Schneider, Greice. "The Wrong Place – Brecht Evens." *The Comics Grid*. 7 Feb. 2011. Web. 15 Mar. 2013. Web.